7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

CHAPTER 9

A Wake

ONE day we received an invitation to a rancho owned by well-to-do people. We knew them, but had not been there before. The messenger bade us welcome and told us that the old man there had gone. Francisco crossed himself and said that an old man, an uncle, had died and that there was to be a funeral feast. What the dead man's name was could not be mentioned. We wanted to witness a burial, so we accepted gratefully and set off at once with camera and guns—Francisco having told us that one fired off guns at the feast. [764]

There were a lot of people already there when we arrived. [763] Members of the family were often informed when illness took a dangerous turn and so arrived while the patient was still alive. On this occasion they had already laid the dead man out. He had been washed: his best ornaments had been put on him and he had been wrapped in the cloths which the women weave specially for this purpose. After death a woman is painted to make her as lovely as possible, but not a man. The dead person is always left alone for a while, [775] so that his soul can go round a last time and take farewell of the place. Having been shrouded, the old man had been laid in the fresh hide of a newly slaughtered bullock and placed in a hammock strung between two poles under a temporary roof covered with grass.

Numbers of people were standing round the dead man's last resting place, while his closest relatives sat in hammocks strung between other poles. All kept their faces covered, either by pulling their cloaks up over them or by draping clothes over their heads. Some were merely clasping their